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birds in flight is, "What large phainopeplas!" Their coloring from a distance appears alike, and their method of slow, dignified flight is quite similar. I speak of black and white plumage, but the black of *Pica pica hudsonica* is much mixed with a bronze green.

As far as I am able to judge by observation, the birds are beneficial, not only destroying injurious insects but acting as scavengers as well. Last summer the "grasshopper became a burden" and it was gratifying to see fifteen or twenty large families of magpies and as many Brewer blackbirds in the alfalfa fields all catching the hoppers.

*Breen, La Plata County, Colorado.*

## AMONG THE GULLS ON KLAMATH LAKE

BY WILLIAM L. FINLEY

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY HERMAN T. BOHLMAN

THE lake region of southern Oregon is perhaps the most extensive breeding ground in the West for all kinds of inland water birds. The country is overspread with great lakes, several of them from twenty to thirty miles across; and reaching out on all sides of these are vast marsh areas and tule fields extending for miles and miles.

The latter part of May, 1905, we set out to study and photograph the bird life of this region. For several days we packed thru the mountains with our heavy camera equipment, and then across a rolling, sage-brush country till we reached Lost River, which empties into Tule or Rhett Lake. Here we abandoned our horses for a stout rowboat, and then for over a month we cruised about Tule Lake, crossed over to White Lake and out into the Lower Klamath.

Tule Lake is a body of water about twenty-five miles long and fifteen to twenty miles wide, cut thru the northern half by the Oregon and California boundary line. A few miles to the northwest is Lower Klamath Lake, about the same size. Between these two larger lakes is a smaller body of water called White Lake, separated from the Lower Klamath by a broad strip of tule land.

The border of these lakes is a veritable jungle. The tules grow in an impenetrable mass from ten to fifteen feet high, and one can never get to a point where he can look out above the tops of the reeds and see where he is going. Then the foundation below is made of decayed vegetation and is treacherous to tread upon. One may wade along in two feet of water a short distance and sink over his head at the next step. We found a few places where the solid roots had formed a sort of a floor at the surface of the water, which was buoyant enough to support us. These precarious footholds were the only camping spots we had for two weeks.

In Lower Klamath Lake stretching for miles and miles to the west is a seemingly endless area of floating tule "islands," between which flow a network of narrow channels. These so-called islands are composed of the decayed growth of generations of tules. Most of them are soft and springy, and sink under the weight of a person.

Gulls love society. They always nest in colonies and live together the entire year. They are most useful birds about the water-fronts of our cities. These gulls have developed certain traits that mark them as land birds rather than birds of the sea. In southern California and Oregon I have watched flocks of them leave the ocean and rivers at daybreak every morning and sail inland for miles,

skirmishing about the country to pick up a living in the fields, following the plow all day long as blackbirds do, and fighting at the farmer's heels for angle worms. I have seen others rummage daily about pig-pens and gorge on the offal thrown out from the slaughter-houses. If any bird is useful to man, the gull is certainly of economic importance as a scavenger.

It was several days before we found the colony of nesting gulls, California and ring-billed (*Larus californicus* and *L. delawarensis*), on Lower Klamath Lake. We were led to the place by watching the course of the small flocks that spread out over the lake in the morning and returned homeward about dusk each evening. From a full mile away, with our field glass, we could see the gulls rising and circling over the low-lying islands. As we rowed nearer, the birds came out to



CALIFORNIA AND RING-BILLED GULLS OVER ROOKERY ON LOWER KLAMATH LAKE, OREGON; 283 BIRDS IN THIS VIEW

meet us, cackling excitedly at the dubious-looking craft approaching so near their homes. They swam about on all sides, curiously following in the wake of our boat. Cormorants flapped along over the surface, pelicans rose heavily from the water, and gulls and terns got thicker and thicker, until when the nose of the boat pushed in at the edge of the island, the air seemed completely filled with a crying, chaotic swarm. We stepped out among the reeds, but had to tread cautiously to keep from breaking eggs or killing young birds. Many youngsters crouched low in their tracks and others scudded off in all directions. Our presence caused such confusion among old and young that we jumped in the boat again and pulled away for fifty yards.

We wanted the opportunity of making an intimate study of the home life of

the gull, but unless in some way we could hide near at hand this was simply impossible, for the whole colony of birds went frantic whenever we approached their nests and young. To overcome this difficulty, we had brought a blind, specially built for the purpose. We had secured an old wagon umbrella of dark-green color. Then taking a long piece of green canvas, we had sewed hooks along the edge about eighteen inches apart, and when these were hooked in at the end of each rib, we had the sides hanging down all around, making a covered tent, in which we could hide with our cameras.

The next morning we pulled down below the gull colony and landed under cover of the high tules. Here we erected the blind and got underneath with our cameras. Then, holding up the umbrella, we began slowly edging toward the rookery. It is hard to say just what the gulls thought this queer-looking object was; they could see no legs, no head, but still it moved. Whereas the day before they had gone wild at our approach, now they paid little attention to the green thing that blended fairly well with the green tules, even tho it gradually approached closer and closer. After maneuvering for almost an hour, we reached



COLONY OF RING-BILLED AND CALIFORNIA GULLS ON TULE ISLAND  
IN LOWER KLAMATH LAKE

the edge of the colony and planted our blind by driving the extension handle of the umbrella into the mud. Some of the parents regarded the green tent with suspicion, backing off or rising to circle around where they could get a full view. But it was not long before the blind seemed to pass as part of the scenery and we were surrounded on all sides by the snow-plumaged birds coming and going, and paying little or no attention to us as we peered out or pointed our cameras thru the loop-holes we cut in the canvas.

Altho there were at least five hundred pairs of gulls nesting so close together, yet housekeeping was in no sense a communal matter. The nests were within two or three feet of each other, but each pair of gulls had its own home spot and the invasion of that place by any other gull was the challenge for a fight. Several times we were the excited spectators of fights that were going on just outside our tent. I watched one old hen, who was very angry because she couldn't find her chicks. As one of her neighbors lit near, she grabbed the tail of the intruder and gave it a sharp jerk. At that both birds grasped each other by the bill and a lively set-to followed. They pulled and tugged till suddenly the old hen let go and



ADULT AND YOUNG CALIFORNIA GULLS  
PHOTOGRAPHED FROM BLIND

grabbed her opponent by the neck and began shaking and hanging on with all the tenacity of a bull pup, till the intruder got enough and departed, leaving the victor with a mouthful of feathers.

Almost all the eggs had hatched and some of the young gulls were about grown. By watching the actions of the parents, I soon discovered that their greatest anxiety seemed to be to keep their children crouching low in the nest so they would not run away and get lost in the crowd. I saw one young gull start to run off thru the reeds, but he hadn't gone a yard before the mother dived at him with a blow that sent him rolling. He got up dazed and started off in a new direction, but she rapped him again on the head till he was glad to crouch down in the dry reeds.

The parents seemed to recognize their own chicks largely by location. Several

times I saw old birds pounce upon youngsters that were running about, and beat them unmercifully. It seemed to be as much the duty of a gull mother to beat her neighbor's children, if they didn't stay home, as to whip her own if they moved out of the nest, but often this would lead to a rough and tumble fight among the old birds. Sometimes a young gull would start to swim off in the water, but it never went far before it was pounced upon and driven back shoreward.

Altho we had an excellent chance to study gull life from our blind, yet we found little pleasure in it at the time. The sun was pelting hot and there was not the faintest movement in the sultry atmosphere. We had to breathe the foulest kind of air on account of the dead birds and decaying fish scattered about, and we were standing in a muck that was continually miring deeper. Swarms of flies and

mosquitoes harassed us constantly, while the perspiration kept dripping from our bodies, till, after three or four hours in the blind, our tongues were parched from thirst, and with loss of strength and patience, we were compelled to quit for the day. But for all we suffered there was a fascination in watching these wild birds going and coming fearlessly almost within arm's reach. For three different days we worked in the blind trying to picture the gulls in their characteristic attitudes of flight.

These gulls are masters in the air. I have watched by the hour birds similar to these following along in the wake of a steamer, but had never before had such chances with a camera. Often they poise, resting apparently motionless on outstretched wings. It is a difficult feat. A small bird can't do it. A sparrow hawk can only poise by the rapid beating of his wings. The gull seems to hang perfectly still; yet there is never an instant when the wings and tail are not constantly adjusted to meet the different air currents. Just as in shooting the rapids in a canoe, the paddle must be adjusted every moment to meet the different eddies, currents and whirlpools, and it is never the same in two different instants. A gull by the perfect adjustment of its body, without a single flap of the wings, makes headway straight in the teeth of the wind. I saw one retain a perfect equilibrium in a stiff breeze, and at the same time reach forward and scratch his ear.

Even tho we had good chances to picture the flying gulls, yet wing-shooting with a camera is such a difficult feat, that several dozen plates yielded but few good negatives. The short interval of time during which it takes a flying bird to sweep across the angle of vision of the lens generally gives the photographer only part of a second's time to aim, focus and shoot. A flight picture well focused and clear and satisfactory in its make-up is the record of a rare shot and a great many misses; perhaps it is more often a good guess, but it is rarely if ever made without a great deal of practice.

*Portland, Oregon.*

## EXPERIENCES WITH THE DOTTED CANYON WREN

BY WRIGHT M. PIERCE

I T was the latter part of June, several years ago, that I happened to be on a camping trip over in Coldwater Canyon, which is situated at the headwaters of the San Gabriel and which leads into Cattle Canyon, a branch of the right fork of the San Gabriel. Near the head of this beautiful Coldwater Canyon we found a cabin, which was badly worn by the weather and rough treatment that it had received at the hands of campers. Here in this cabin, the sides of which were made of logs with wide cracks between them, we made camp. The few rough shakes which served as a roof would afford poor shelter from either rain or sun. This cabin is typical of the old miners' cabins which one comes across when traveling thru the mountain wilds of southern California; but within I found a little home that would not, I believe, be called typical of miners' cabins.

This home was in an old dry-goods box which was suspended from the ceiling by baling wire. The box had evidently been used previously by campers as a